

FORM PTO-1390
(REV 11-98)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER

WEAT/0043

TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO THE UNITED STATES
DESIGNATED/ELECTED OFFICE (DO/EO/US)
CONCERNING A FILING UNDER 35 U.S.C. 371

U.S. APPLICATION NO. (If known, see 37 CFR 1.5)

09/509073

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.
PCT/GB99/02203INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE
22 July 1999 (22.07.1999)PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED
22 July 1998TITLE OF INVENTION AN APPARATUS FOR FACILITATING THE CONNECTION OF TUBULARS USING A TOP
DRIVE

APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US BERND-GEORG PIETRAS and ROBERT PATRICK APPLETON

Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information:

1. ☒ This is a **FIRST** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
2. ☐ This is a **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. 371.
3. ☐ This express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. 371(f)) at any time rather than delay examination until the expiration of the applicable time limit set in 35 U.S.C. 371(b) and PCT Articles 22 and 39(1).
4. ☐ A proper Demand for International Preliminary Examination was made by the 19th month from the earliest claimed priority date.
5. ☒ A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2))
 - a. ☒ is transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).
 - b. ☒ has been transmitted by the International Bureau.
 - c. ☐ is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US).
6. ☐ A translation of the International Application into English (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(2)).
7. ☒ Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3))
 - a. ☐ are transmitted herewith (required only if not transmitted by the International Bureau).
 - b. ☐ have been transmitted by the International Bureau.
 - c. ☐ have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired.
 - d. ☒ have not been made and will not be made.
8. ☐ A translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(3)).
9. ☒ An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(4)). (UNSIGNED)
10. ☐ A translation of the annexes to the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. 371(c)(5)).

Items 11. to 16. below concern document(s) or information included:

11. ☐ An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98.
12. ☐ An assignment document for recording. A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included.
13. ☒ A FIRST preliminary amendment.
☐ A SECOND or SUBSEQUENT preliminary amendment.
14. ☐ A substitute specification.
15. ☐ A change of power of attorney and/or address letter.
16. ☒ Other items or information:

PCT REQUEST
INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

09/20/2000 LANDGRA 00000038 200782 09509073

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380.00 CH

U.S. APPLICATION NO. (if known, see 37 CFR 1.5)

09/509076

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.
PCT/GB99/02203ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER
WEAT/0043

- 17.
- ☒
- The following fees are submitted:

BASIC NATIONAL FEE (37 CFR 1.492(a)(1)-(5)):

Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482)
nor international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO
and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO \$970.00

International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to
USPTO but International Search Report prepared by the EPO or JPO \$840.00

International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but
international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO \$760.00

International preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482)
but all claims did not satisfy provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) \$670.00

International preliminary examination fee paid to USPTO (37 CFR 1.482)
and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) \$96.00

ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT =**CALCULATIONS** PTO USE ONLY

\$ 840.00

Surcharge of \$130.00 for furnishing the oath or declaration later than ☐ 20 ☐ 30
months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(e)).

\$

CLAIMS	NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA	RATE
Total claims	24 - 20 =	4	X \$18.00
Independent claims	3 - 3 =	0	X \$78.00
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM(S) (if applicable)			+ \$260.00

\$72.00

\$ 0.00

\$

TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS =

\$

Reduction of 1/2 for filing by small entity, if applicable. A Small Entity Statement
must also be filed (Note 37 CFR 1.9, 1.27, 1.28).

\$

SUBTOTAL =

\$

Processing fee of \$130.00 for furnishing the English translation later than ☐ 20 ☐ 30
months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(f)).

\$

+

TOTAL NATIONAL FEE =

\$

Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.21(h)). The assignment must be
accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31). \$40.00 per property

\$

+

TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED =

\$912.00

Amount to be:
refunded

\$

charged

\$ 912.00

- a.
- ☐
- A check in the amount of \$_____ to cover the above fees is enclosed.

- b. ☒ Please charge my Deposit Account No. 20-0782/WEAT/0043/WBP
in the amount of \$ 912.00 to cover the above fees.
A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

- c. ☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any
overpayment to Deposit Account No. 20-0782/WEAT/0043/WBP. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.137(a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status.

SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

W. BRUCE PATTERSON
3040 POST OAK
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SIGNATURE:

W. BRUCE PATTERSON

NAME

34,102

REGISTRATION NUMBER

MARCH 20, 2000

09/509073

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of: Pietras et al.

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Group Art Unit: Unknown

Serial No.: Unassigned

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Examiner: Unknown

Filed: Herewith

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For: An apparatus For Facilitating The
Connection of Tubulars Using A
Top Drive

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BOX PCT

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Dear Sir:

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING
37 C.F.R. 1.10I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited on
3 March 2000, with the United States Postal Service as
Express Mail No. EL541342652US, in an envelope addressed to:
BOX PCT, Assistant Commissioner for Patents,, Washington, D.C.
20231.3 March
DateWilliam B. Pietras
Signature

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Prior to examination, please amend the above-identified application as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 25.

Please amend the following claims:

Claim 3, line 1, please delete "or 2".

Claim 4, line 1, please delete "2 or 3".

Claim 5, line 1, please delete "2, 3 or 4".

Claim 7, line 1, please delete "any preceding claim", and insert --claim 1--.

Claim 8, line 1, please delete "any preceding claim", and insert --claim 1--.

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Claim 10, line 1, please delete "or 9".

Claim 12, line 1, please delete "any preceding claim", and insert ---claim 1--.

Claim 13, line 1, please delete "9, 10 or 11".

Claim 14, line 1, please delete "any preceding claim", and insert --claim 1--.

Claim 20, line 1, please delete "or 19".

Claim 21, line 1, please delete "19 or 20".

Claim 22, line 1, please delete "any one of claims 17 to 21" and insert --claim 17--.


Claim 23, line 1, please delete "any one of claims 17 to 22" and insert --claim 17--.

Claim 24, line 1, please delete "any one of claims 17 to 23" and insert --claim 17--.

REMARKS

The above amendments have been made to remove the multiple dependencies in the claims. Early and favorable action in connection with this application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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**"An Apparatus for Facilitating the Connection
of Tubulars Using a Top Drive"**

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This invention relates to an apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive and is more particularly, but not exclusively, intended for facilitating the connection of a section or stand of casing to a string of casing.

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In the construction of oil or gas wells it is usually necessary to line the borehole with a string of tubulars known as casing. Because of the length of the casing required, sections or stands of say two sections of casing are progressively added to the string as it is lowered into the well from a drilling platform. In particular, when it is desired to add a section or stand of casing the string is usually restrained from falling into the well by applying the slips of a spider located in the floor of the drilling platform. The new section or stand of casing is then moved from a rack to the well centre above the spider. The threaded pin of the section or stand of casing to be connected is then located over the threaded box of the casing in the well and the connection is made up by rotation therebetween. An elevator is then connected to the top of the new section or stand and the whole casing string lifted slightly to enable the slips of the spider to be released. The whole casing string is then lowered until the top of the section is adjacent the spider whereupon the slips of the spider are re-applied, the elevator disconnected and the process repeated.

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It is common practice to use a power tong to torque the connection up to a predetermined torque in order to make the connection. The power tong is located on the platform, either on rails, or hung from a derrick on a chain. However, it has recently been proposed to use a top drive for making such connection. A "top drive" is a top driven rotational system substantially used for drilling purposes, assigned to the drawworks at a higher level than the elevator, as is previously known.

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Because of the high costs associated with the construction of oil and gas wells time is critical and it has been observed by the applicants that the time to connect a tubular to a top drive using existing equipment could be reduced.

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Accordingly there is provided an apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, which apparatus comprises a body connectable to said top drive, said body comprising at least one gripping element radially displaceable by hydraulic or pneumatic fluid to drivingly engage a tubular to permit a screw connection between said tubular and a further tubular to be tightened to the required torque.

Other features of the invention are set out in Claims 2 to 14.

10 The present invention also provides an apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, said apparatus comprising a body connectable to said top drive, said body comprising at least one gripping element radially displaceable to drivingly engage said tubular and a sealing packer to inhibit, in use, fluid in said tubular from escaping therefrom.

15 Preferably, said sealing packer can be actuated by hydraulic or pneumatic fluid.

One advantage of at least preferred embodiments of the invention is that the gripping elements transfer the full torque capacity of the top drive to the casing without damaging the pipe surface. Elastomeric jaws greatly reduce the marks made by the dies as compared to simple metal dies. Elastomeric jaws also enable pipes with differing inside diameters to be clamped with only one set of jaws.

The present invention also provides an apparatus for running tubulars into a borehole, said apparatus comprising a body provided with a wedge lock assembly and a hydraulically operable grapple to mechanically grip the inside wall of a tubular to be run into, or withdrawn from, the borehole, said grapple incorporating positive locking means to prevent inadvertent release of said grapple, said body further comprising means to prevent spillage of drilling fluid when the body is withdrawn from the tubular, a sealing packer for engagement with the tubular to permit fluid to be circulated within the tubular, and a stabbing guide.

Further features of the apparatus for running tubulars into a borehole in accordance with the present invention are set out in Claims 18 to 24.

In use, such an apparatus may be connected to a top-drive unit via a threaded connection, or to a kelly driven rig via a pump joint latched into an elevator. Both systems have available a means of connecting up to a circulating system that will permit the casing to be filled or circulated at any time during the running operation.

Casing is normally run by picking up a joint at a time, utilising single pickup elevators to bring the joint into the derrick and connect it to the previously run joint, whether it be by threaded connection or "mechanical latching or locking". The two joints are either screwed or locked together and then lowered into the well bore using elevators.

With heavy casing strings it is required that very large elevators are used to be able to handle the load. This often means that the top of the casing joint must be set 8-10 feet above the rig floor to permit disengagement to take place. Scaffolding is often required for the rig crews to be able to stab or connect the next joint to the string. It is also normal to either utilise a separate pack-off assembly, or a fillup hose that must be installed by the rig crew after it has been lowered and set in the slips.

Preferred embodiments of the present invention will permit the casing to be picked up by single pickup elevators, connected either by rotation or mechanical latch, and then the casing running tool to be "stabbed" into the bore of the top joint without damage, due to the rubber bull-nose guide. When the tool is at the correct depth of penetration within the casing bore, the hydraulic piston is actuated to drive the grapple down onto the wedge lock and secure the grapple to the casing wall. As the casing string is lifted, the wedge-lock continues to drive into the grapple bore, providing an ever increasing wedge lock. The compression spring installed within the hydraulic piston provides a "positive-lock" or failsafe should the hydraulic system fail for any reason.

When the apparatus is engaged, it is then possible to push, pull, or even rotate the casing string. A seal ring assembly is required to rotate the casing string, to permit constant control of the hydraulic actuating piston to be maintained.

- 5 Preferred embodiments of the apparatus are equipped with a through-bore to permit casing fillup and circulation to take place at any time. There may also be provided a pack-off that can be either inflatable or flow pressure operated.

The present invention also provides a top drive having an apparatus in
10 accordance with the present invention attached thereto.

Some preferred embodiments of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

- 15 Figure 1 is a cross-sectional side view of a first embodiment of an apparatus in accordance with the present invention inserted in a section of casing;

Figure 2 shows the apparatus of Figure 1 connected to a top drive and inserted in a section of casing;

20

Figure 3 shows a cross-sectional side view in perspective of part of a second embodiment of an apparatus in accordance with the present invention;

- 25 Figure 4 shows a cross-sectional side view of a third embodiment of an apparatus in accordance with the present invention; and

Figure 5 shows a cross-sectional side view of the embodiment of Figure 4 in use.

- 30 Referring to Figure 1 there is shown an apparatus which is generally identified by reference numeral 1.

The apparatus 1 comprises a cylindrical body 2 which has a central passage 3 therethrough. The cylindrical body 2 has circumferentially spaced recesses 4 thereabout in which respective gripping elements 5 are located.

5 The upper part 6 of the cylindrical body 2 is of a reduced outer diameter. The upper part 6 passes through a rotary transmission 7 and is rotatably supported by two bearings 8, 9 which are arranged in corresponding channels 10, 11 in an annular support 12. A circumferentially raised portion 13 between the two bearings 8, 9 is provided in the upper part 6 to inhibit longitudinal movement of the cylindrical body 2.

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The rotary transmission 7 is mounted fast on the annular support 12 and is in sealing tight relation with the upper part 6 which is rotatable relative thereto. The rotary transmission 7 is provided with a feed passage 15 in the annular support 12 and with a feed line 16. The other end of the feed passage 14 is in fluid communication with a radial channel 17. Feed passages 18 are provided in the cylindrical body 2 to link the radial channel 17 with the circumferential recesses 4 behind each gripping element 5.

15 The upper part 6 is provided with internal splines 19 along the upper part of the passage 3. The lower end of a connecting member 20 is provided with corresponding external splines and is located in the upper part of the passage 3. The upper end of the connecting member 20 is provided with a circulating canal 22 and threads 23 for connection to a top drive (Figure 2).

20 The support member 12 is provided with two axles 24, 25 to which compensating cylinders 26, 27 are attached, the corresponding pistons 28, 29 being, in use, connected to the body of the top drive (Figure 2).

25 Gripping elements 5 are preferably based on the construction described in PCT Publication No. WO 94/05894 which is incorporated herein for all purposes, and sold by the applicants under the trade mark "MICRO-GRIP".

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The gripping elements 5 comprise a plurality of longitudinally extending strips (not shown) which are embedded side by side in an elastomeric base member (not shown). Each strip projects out from said elastomeric base member, and each strip has a pipe gripping edge (not shown) facing away from the elastomeric base member, so that channels are formed between adjacent strips to accommodate debris from the surface of the casing to be gripped. The pipe gripping edge may, for example, comprise teeth, so that the strips resemble saw blades, or may comprise particulate material bonded to the strips. This type of gripping element allows rotational torque to be applied to the tubular and longitudinal forces produced by circulating fluid within the tubular and the weight of the tubular to be taken.

The cylindrical body 2 is shown in Figure 1 in a section of casing 20 with gripping elements 5 in a radially extended position, engaging the inner wall 31 of the section of casing 30 beneath a threaded box 32.

In use, the pistons 28, 29 are connected to the stator 34 of the top drive 33 (Figure 2). The rotor 35 of the top drive 33 is connected to the connecting member 20. The section of casing 30 is positioned over the upper portion of a casing string using, for example, a pipe positioning device. The top drive 33 with the attached apparatus 1 is lowered so that the cylindrical body 2 thereof enters the casing 30. Alternatively, the section or stand of casing may be brought towards the apparatus 1 using the methods and apparatus disclosed in co-pending UK Patent Application No. 9818366.8 entitled "Methods and Apparatus for Facilitating the Connection of Tubulars Using a Top Drive" filed by the applicant for the present application on 24 August 1998. If the support member 12 hits the top of the threaded box 32, the compensating cylinders 26, 27, which contain compressed air, cushion the impact whilst the splines 19, 21 in the upper part 6 of the cylindrical body 2 will allow relative longitudinal movement between the apparatus 1 and the top drive 33 whilst being able to transmit rotation therebetween.

Hydraulic pressure is applied through feed line 16, feed passage 15, feed passage 14, radial channel 17, and feed passage 18 into recess 4 behind gripping elements 5,

forcing the gripping elements 5 radially outwardly to engage the inner wall 31 of the casing 30.

The top drive 33 may now be used to rotate the rotor 35 which in turn rotates the connecting member 20, the cylindrical body 2 and hence the casing 30. The compensating cylinders 26, 27 will allow a small downward movement as the threaded pin on the bottom of the casing enters the box on the top of the string, and may be controlled remotely. The compensating cylinders 26, 27 may be of the pneumatic compensating type, i.e. their internal pressure may be adjusted to compensate for the weight of the casing 30 so that movement of the tubular may be conducted with minimal force. Pneumatic compensating cylinders also reduce the risk of damage to the threads of the tubulars. This can conveniently be achieved by introducing pneumatic fluid into the cylinders 26, 27 and adjusting the pressure therein. Hydraulic cylinders may, however, be used or hydraulic cylinders provided with a pneumatic bellows system.

Once the joint is correctly tightened the elevator 37 is swung into position and the elevator slips therein (not shown) are actuated to grip the casing 30 beneath the box 32. The top drive 33 is then raised a small amount using the drawworks to enable the slips in the spider to be released and the top drive and casing string is then lowered.

As the casing is lowered liquid may be introduced into the casing 30 via the connecting canal 22 and the central passage 3. The introduction of such liquid is often desirable to facilitate the lowering of the casing.

Referring to Figure 3 there is shown an apparatus in accordance with a second embodiment of the present invention which is generally identified by the reference numeral 101.

The apparatus 101 is generally similar to that of Figure 1, in that it comprises a cylindrical body 102 which has a central passage 103 therethrough. The cylindrical

body 102 has recesses 104 thereabout in which gripping elements 105 are located. The gripping elements 105 are provided with recesses 106.

The cylindrical body 102 is also provided with a cylindrical sealing packer 107 arranged below the gripping elements 105. The cylindrical sealing packer 107 is provided with a recess 108. The cylindrical sealing packer 107 which is made from an elastomeric material is fast with the cylindrical body 102.

The cylindrical body 102 is provided with a feed passage 109 which is at the upper end connected to a hydraulic fluid supply, and at the other, to the recesses 106 and 108 in the gripping elements 105 and the cylindrical sealing packer 107 respectively.

In use, the apparatus 101 is connected to a top drive, such as that shown in Figure 2, and is inserted into the top of a section or stand of casing 110. Hydraulic fluid pressure is applied through feed passage 109 into recesses 106 and 108 which moves the gripping elements 105 into engagement with the inner wall 111 and the cylindrical sealing packer 107 into contact with the inner wall 111. The gripping elements 105 engage with the inner wall 111 of the casing 110 so that rotational force can be transmitted from the apparatus 101 to the casing 110. The sealing packer 107 substantially prevents any fluids such as mud from escaping between the apparatus 101 and the casing 110. This is particularly advantageous where it is desired to circulate fluid to facilitate running the casing. In particular, if the casing string becomes lodged on an obstruction, liquid can be pumped down the casing string under high pressure to remove the obstruction. The sealing packer 107 facilitates this operation by inhibiting liquid under high pressure escaping through the top of the casing 30.

Referring to Figures 4 and 5 there is shown an apparatus in accordance with a third embodiment of the present invention which is generally identified by the reference numeral 201.

The apparatus comprises a cylindrical body 202 with a threaded connection 203 at the upper end for connection to a top drive. Attached to the cylindrical body 202, or machined into it, is a hydraulic cylinder 204, with threaded ports 205, 206 at opposite ends. These ports 205 and 206 permit hydraulic fluid to be injected under pressure to
5 manipulate a hydraulic piston 207, secured within the cylinder by a threaded lock ring 208. A compression spring 209 is located in the cylinder 204 above the piston 207.

A grapple 210, provided with serrated teeth machined into its outer surface, is provided around the cylindrical body 202 below the hydraulic cylinder 204. The
10 grapple 210 is connected to the hydraulic piston 207 by a threaded connection 211. A corresponding wedge lock 212 is provided on the cylindrical body 202. The grapple 210 and corresponding wedge lock 212 are located, in use, inside a casing 213. The piston 207 and lock ring 208 are fitted with seal rings (not shown) to prevent hydraulic fluid leakage.

15 A mud-check valve 214 is thread connected at the lower end of the wedge lock 212. Below this valve is a rubber pack-off assembly 215. These prevent spillage of drilling fluid when the apparatus 201 is removed from within the casing joint 213. The pack-off 215 can be energised by either internal mud pressure or external mud flow.

20 In use, the apparatus 201 is lowered into the casing joint 213 as shown in Figure 4. The grapple 210 is held out of contact with the wedge lock 212 by hydraulic fluid injected into port 206.

25 When the apparatus 201 is located at the correct installation depth within the casing 213, the pressure and fluid is released from port 206, and fluid is injected into port 205. This pushes the piston 207 downwards, pressing the grapple 210 against the wedge lock 212. The grapple 210 is forced outwards by the wedge lock 212, forming a mechanical friction grip against the inner wall of the casing 213. This is shown in
30 Figure 5.

The rig lifting equipment (not shown) raises the apparatus 201, and this causes the wedge lock 212 to be pulled upwards against the inner surface of the grapple 210, ensuring that constant outward pressure is applied to the grapple 210. The grip becomes tighter with increasing pull exerted by the rig lifting equipment.

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Should hydraulic pressure be lost from port 205, the compression spring 209 ensures that the piston 207 continues to press the grapple 210 against the wedge lock 212, preventing release of the grapple from the wedge lock.

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The apparatus 201 and casing 213 are then lowered into the well bore and the casing is secured. The apparatus 201 is lowered so that it supports its own weight only, and hydraulic fluid is then pumped out of port 205 and into port 206 to release the grapple 210 from the wedge lock 212 and thus release the apparatus 201 from the casing 213. The apparatus is then removed from the casing joint 213 and the process is

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repeated.

It is envisaged that the apparatus as described above could be used in conjunction with any of the apparatus and used with any of the methods as described in the co-pending International Applications based on GB Application Nos. 9818360.1, 9818363.5 and 9818366.8 entitled "An Apparatus for Facilitating the Connection of Tubulars Using a Top Drive", "Method and Apparatus for Facilitating the Connection of Tubulars using a Top Drive" and "Method and Apparatus for Facilitating the Connection of Tubulars using a Top Drive" respectively.

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CLAIMS:

1. An apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, which apparatus comprises a body (2; 102) connectable to said top drive, said body (2; 102) comprising at least one gripping element (5; 105) radially displaceable by hydraulic or pneumatic fluid to drivingly engage a tubular (30; 110) to permit a screw connection between said tubular and a further tubular to be tightened to the required torque.
2. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said at least one gripping element (5; 105) has an elastomeric gripping surface incorporating projecting metal inserts or saw blades capable of transmitting said torque.
3. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said at least one gripping element (5; 105) is movable radially outwardly from said body (2; 102) to engage the inside wall (31; 111) of said tubular (30; 110)
4. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein said body (2; 102) is connectable to a rotor (35) of said top drive in order to rotate said apparatus.
5. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, 2, 3 or 4, further comprising a sealing packer (107) for engagement with said tubular.
6. An apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein said sealing packer (107) can be activated by hydraulic or pneumatic fluid.
7. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said body (2; 102) is provided with a passage (3; 103) therethrough to allow excess fluid in said tubular to escape therefrom.
8. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising a support (12) for supporting the weight of said tubular during driving engagement of the tubular by said at least one gripping element (5; 105).

9. An apparatus as claimed in claim 8, wherein said support (12) is connectable to a stator of said top drive.
10. An apparatus as claimed in claim 8 or 9, wherein said support (12) is carried by compensating pistons (26, 27) connectable to said top drive.
11. An apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said compensating pistons (26, 27) are pneumatically operable and are adjustable to compensate for different weights of tubular.
12. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein an upper part of said body (2) comprises a splined recess into which a splined rotor or splined connecting member (20) may be located.
13. An apparatus as claimed in claim 8, 9, 10 or 11, wherein said support (12) is arranged circumjacent an upper part of said body (2) with a bearing (8, 9) arranged therebetween to allow said body (2) to rotate with respect to said support (12).
14. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising a rotary transmission (7) to allow hydraulic or pneumatic fluid to pass through said body (2; 102).
15. An apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, said apparatus comprising a body (102) connectable to said top drive, said body (102) comprising at least one gripping element (105) radially displaceable to drivingly engage a tubular (110) and a sealing packer (107) to inhibit, in use, fluid in said tubular from escaping therefrom.
16. An apparatus as claimed in claim 15, wherein said sealing packer can be actuated by hydraulic or pneumatic fluid.

17. An apparatus (201) for running tubulars (213) into a borehole, said apparatus comprising a body (202) provided with a wedge lock assembly (212) and a hydraulically operable grapple (210) to mechanically grip the inside wall of a tubular (213) to be run into, or withdrawn from, the borehole, said grapple incorporating positive locking means to prevent inadvertent release of said grapple, said body further comprising means (214) to prevent spillage of drilling fluid when the body is withdrawn from the tubular, a sealing packer (215) for engagement with the tubular to permit fluid to be circulated within the tubular, and a stabbing guide (216).
18. An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein the grapple (210) is connected to a hydraulic piston assembly (204,207) to permit engagement of the grapple with the inside walls of the tubular (213) to enable mechanical lift to be applied to the tubular.
19. An apparatus as claimed in claim 18, wherein the hydraulic piston assembly (204,207) is biased towards a failsafe position by a compression spring (209).
20. An apparatus as claimed in claim 18 or 19, wherein the hydraulic piston assembly incorporates a cylinder (204) which is either formed integrally with the body (202) or is attached thereto by threading or flanging.
21. An apparatus as claimed in claim 18, 19 or 20, wherein the body (202) is provided with a slip-ring assembly to enable hydraulic fluid to be supplied to the hydraulic piston assembly (204,207) whilst at the same time permitting rotation of the body and the tubular (213) thereon.
22. An apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 17 to 21, which is adapted to be used with different sizes of tubular.
23. An apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 17 to 22, wherein the body (202) is fitted with a bull-nose guide (216) to prevent damage to the top of the tubular when the body is introduced into the tubular.

25. A top drive having an apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim attached
5 thereto.

ABSTRACT**"An Apparatus for Facilitating the Connection
of Tubulars Using a Top Drive"**

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An apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, which apparatus comprises a body (2; 102) connectable to said top drive, said body (2; 102) comprising at least one gripping element (5; 105) radially displaceable by hydraulic or
10 pneumatic fluid to drivingly engage said tubular (30; 110) to permit a screw connection between said tubular and a further tubular to be tightened to the required torque.

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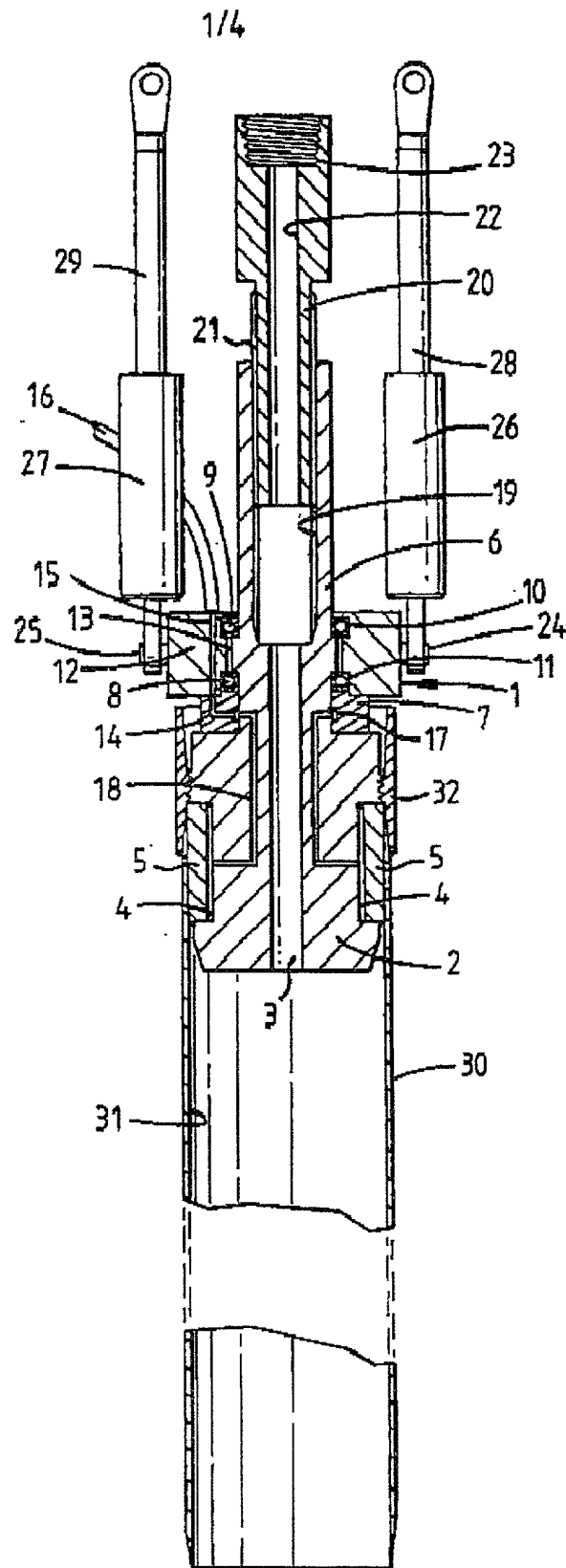


Fig. 1

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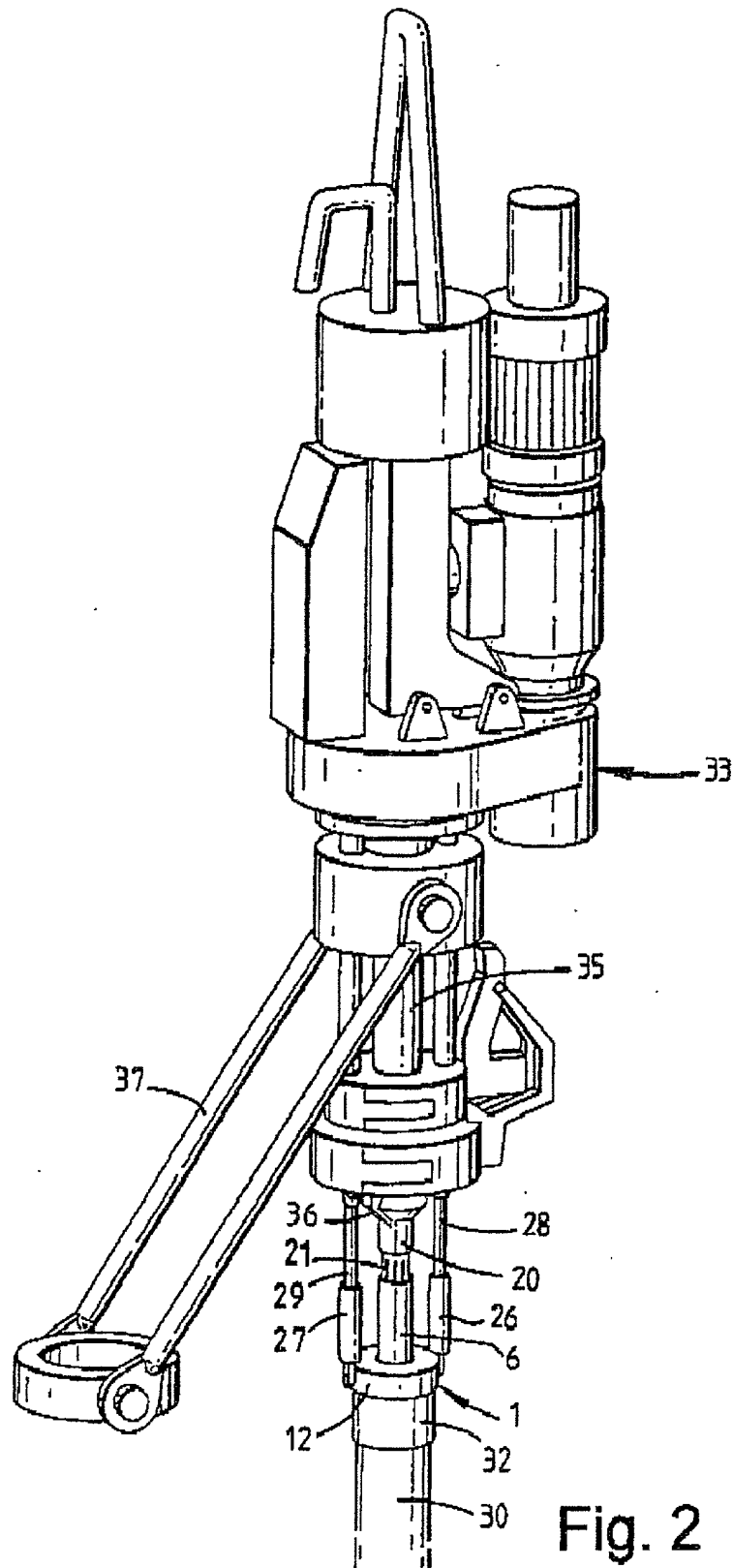


Fig. 2

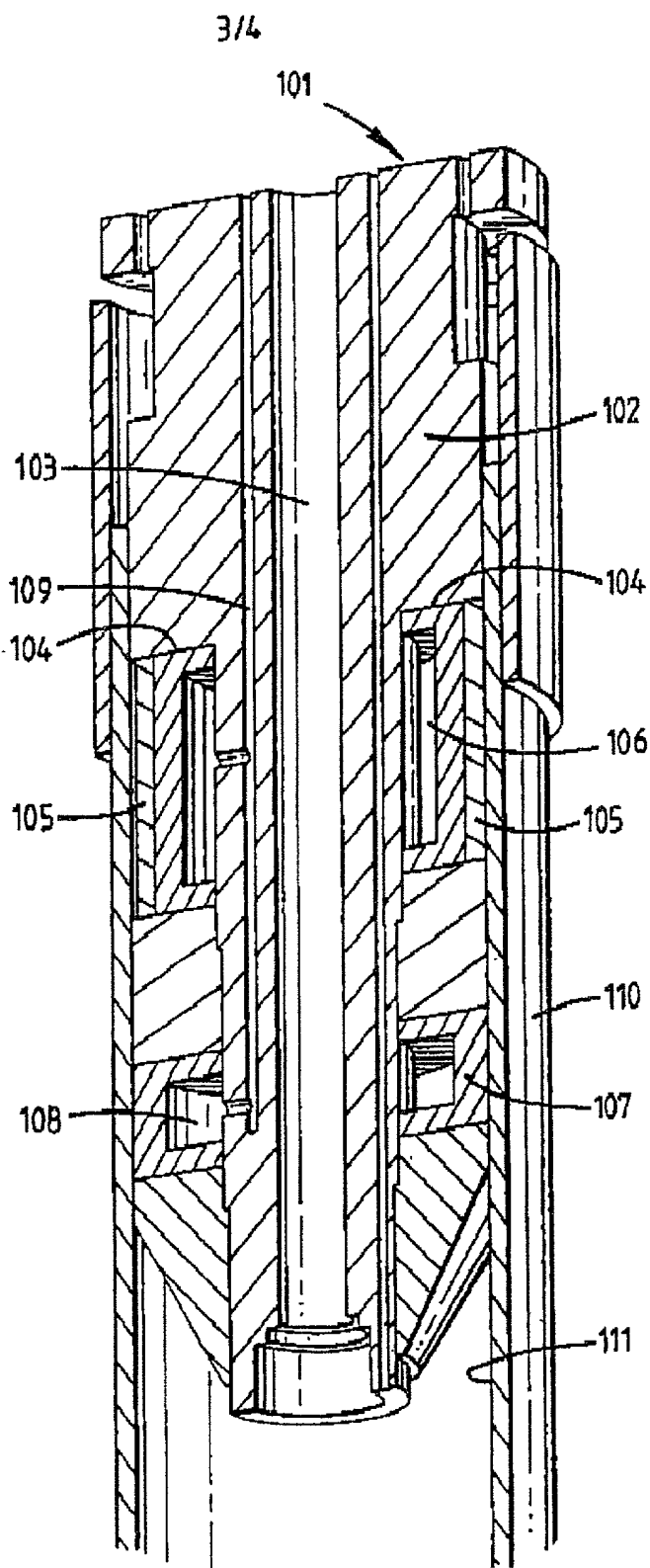


Fig. 3

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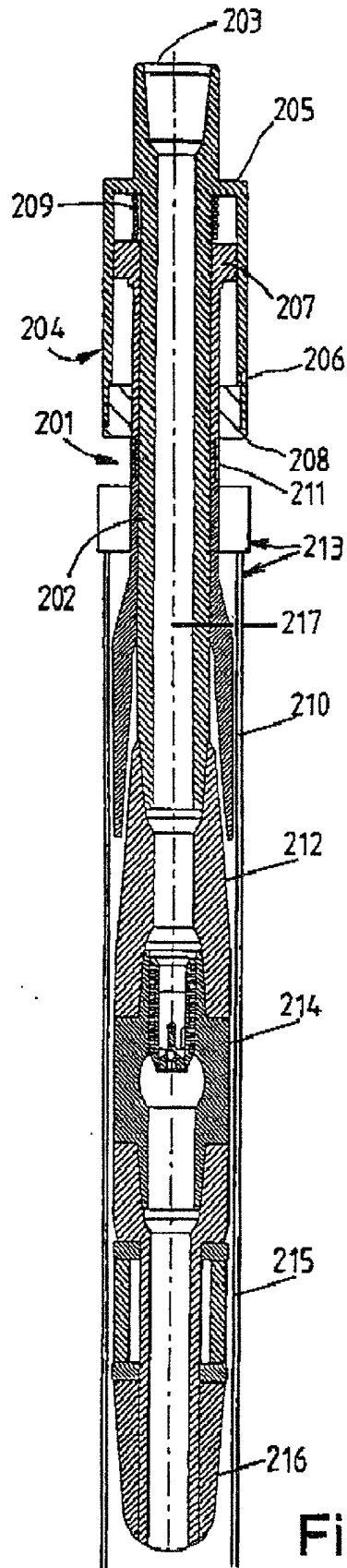


Fig. 4

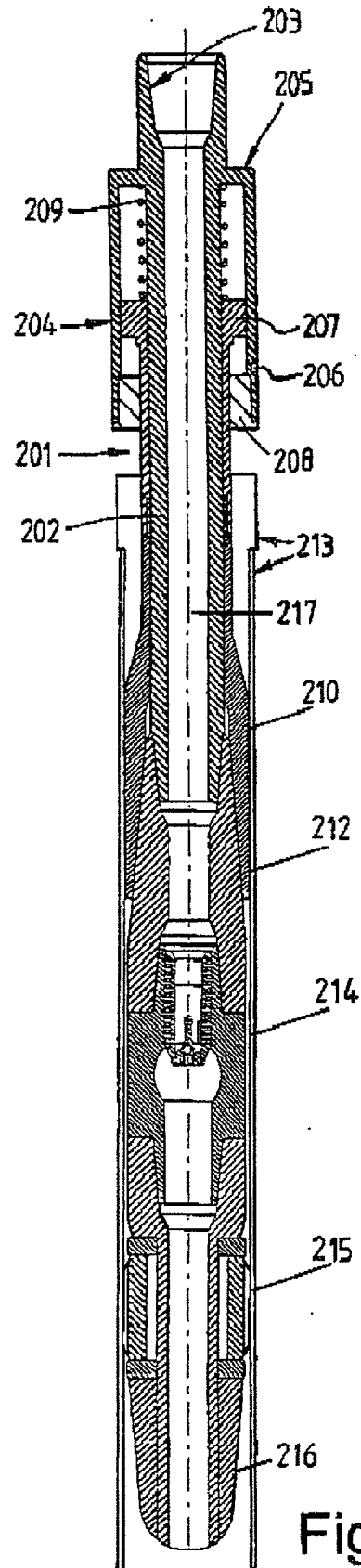


Fig. 5



#3

Atty. Dkt. No. MRKS/0012

COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

This declaration is of the following type:

- ☒ original
- ☐ divisional
- ☐ continuation
- ☐ continuation-in-part

INVENTORSHIP IDENTIFICATION

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name. I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

AN APPARATUS FOR FACILITATING THE CONNECTION OF TUBULARS USING A TOP DRIVE

SPECIFICATION IDENTIFICATION

The specification of which:

- ☐ is attached hereto
- ☒ was filed on March 20, 2000, under Serial No. 09/509,073, executed on even date herewith; or
- ☐ Express Mail No.(as Serial No. not yet known)
and was amended on _____ (if applicable)
- ☒ was described and claimed in PCT International Application No.PCT/GB/02203
filed on 22 July 1999 and as amended under PCT Article 19 on _____.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF REVIEW OF PAPERS AND DUTY OF CANDOR

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose all information I know to be material to patentability in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56,

and which is material to the examination of this application; namely, information where there is a substantial likelihood that a reasonable Examiner would consider it important in deciding whether to allow the application to issue as a patent, and

- ☐ In compliance with this duty there is attached an Information Disclosure Statement in accordance with 37 CFR §1.98.

PRIORITY CLAIM (35 U.S.C. §119)

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, §119, of any provisional or foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate or of any PCT international application(s) designating at least one country other than the United States of America listed below, and have also identified below any provisional or foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate or any PCT international application(s) designating at least one country other than the United States of America filed by me on the same subject matter having a filing date before that of the application(s) of which priority is claimed.

☐ No such applications have been filed.

☒ Such applications have been filed as follows:

- A. Prior foreign/PCT application(s) filed within 12 mos. (6 mos. for design) prior to this application, and any priority claims under 35 U.S.C. §119

<u>Country/PCT</u>	<u>Application No</u>	<u>Date Filed</u>	<u>Priority Claimed</u>
GB	9815809.0	22 July 1998 22.07.1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
GB	9818358.5	24 August 1998 24.08.1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

- B. All foreign application(s), if any, filed more than 12 mos. (6 mos for design) prior to this U.S. application

Country:
Application No:
Filing date:

- C. U.S. Provisional Application filed within 12 months prior to this application

<u>Serial No.</u>	<u>Filing Date</u>
-------------------	--------------------

PRIORITY CLAIM (35 U.S.C. §120)

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §120, of any United States application(s) or PCT international application(s) designating the United States of America that is/are listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in that/those prior application(s) in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information that is material to the examination of this application (namely, information where there is substantial likelihood that a reasonable Examiner would consider it important in deciding whether to allow the application to issue as a patent) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application(s) and the national or PCT international filing date of this application.

☒ No such applications have been filed

☐ Such applications have been filed, as follows:

<u>Serial No.</u>	<u>Filing Date</u>	<u>Status</u>		
		<u>Patented</u>	<u>Pending</u>	<u>Abandoned</u>

POWER OF ATTORNEY

I hereby appoint the following attorneys and/or agents to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith:

5/

Raymond R. Moser, Jr.	Registration No. 34,682
B. Todd Patterson	Registration No. 37,906
Keith M. Tackett	Registration No. 32,008
Douglas H. Elliott	Registration No. 32,982
William B. Patterson	Registration No. 34,102

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THOMASON, MOSER & PATTERSON, L.L.P.
3040 Post Oak Boulevard, Suite 1500
Houston, Texas 77056

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and, further, that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Sec. 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patents issued thereon.

Full name of first inventor: BERND-GEORG PIETRAS

Inventor's signature: Bernd-Georg Pietras Date: 25.5.2000

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Germany DEX

Post Office Address: Same as above. Country of Citizenship: GERMAN

Full name of second inventor: ROBERT PATRICK APPLETON

Inventor's signature: _____ Date: _____

Residence: Glenburn House
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Scotland
U.K.

Post Office Address: Same as above. Country of Citizenship: U.K.

(Declaration ends with this page)

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Inventor's signature: R.P. Appleton Date: 08-07-00
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(Declaration ends with this page)